

Transformative Multiculturalism in Islamic Higher Education: Reconstructing Academic Culture through the Synergy of Teaching, Research, and Community Engagement

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Abstract

This study was motivated by the growing need to manage diversity in Islamic Higher Education Institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam*, PTKI), particularly as multiculturalism is still often understood normatively as tolerance, religious moderation, or the prevention of radicalism, rather than as a transformative academic culture. This study aims to analyze the transformation of multiculturalism in PTKI through the reconstruction of academic culture based on the synergy of the three missions of higher education. Employing a qualitative approach, this study used library research as its research design. The data were obtained from academic books, journal articles, previous studies, policy documents, and relevant literature on multicultural education, critical pedagogy, religious moderation, academic culture, and Islamic higher education. The data were collected through documentation and analyzed using critical-interpretative analysis through the stages of data condensation, thematic categorization, critical interpretation, and conceptual synthesis. The findings indicate that the strengthening of multiculturalism in PTKI remains largely normative-formalistic, previous studies have predominantly focused on the issues of moderation, curriculum, and institutional policy, and the three missions of higher education have not been sufficiently positioned as a basis for multicultural transformation. This study produces a conceptual construction called the Transformative Multiculturalism Framework in Islamic Higher Education, which integrates the epistemological foundation of inclusive Islam, multicultural education, critical pedagogy, deliberative democracy, religious moderation, and the synergy of the three missions of higher education. This framework contributes to the development of multicultural Islamic education studies and serves as a practical reference for PTKI in building an academic culture that is democratic, inclusive, reflective, and emancipatory.

Keywords: transformative multiculturalism, Islamic higher education, academic culture, critical pedagogy, three missions of higher education

INTRODUCTION

Religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and social diversity has become one of the defining challenges of higher education worldwide. While diversity provides important social capital for strengthening democracy, justice, and social cohesion, it may also generate intolerance and identity-based conflicts when not managed through inclusive and dialogic educational systems. According to the Pew Research Center, the number of countries experiencing high or very high levels of religion-related social hostilities increased from 45 in 2022

to 55 in 2023, indicating that intolerance and exclusivism remain growing global concerns. Similarly, UNESCO (2020) emphasizes that exclusion in education continues to arise from differences in religion, ethnicity, language, disability, migration, poverty, and social identity. These conditions underscore that higher education should function not only as a center for knowledge transmission but also as a space for cultivating multicultural awareness, critical citizenship, and social inclusion (Banks & Banks, 2019; Sleeter, 2018).

Indonesia represents one of the world's largest multicultural societies, characterized by its rich diversity of ethnic groups, local languages, religions, and socio-cultural traditions. While this diversity constitutes a valuable national asset, it also presents substantial challenges for maintaining social cohesion. Data from Statistics Indonesia and the national survey conducted by PPIM UIN Jakarta through CONVEY Indonesia indicate that intolerance and exclusivist attitudes remain evident within higher education, with 30.16% of university students categorized as having low or very low levels of religious tolerance. These findings suggest that multiculturalism should no longer be viewed as a complementary educational agenda but as a fundamental prerequisite for developing democratic and inclusive academic cultures.

Responding to these challenges, the Indonesian government has placed religious moderation at the center of national educational policy through Presidential Regulation No. 58 of 2023 and Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 3 of 2024. Within higher education, these policies aim to foster moderate, tolerant, non-violent, and culturally responsive academic environments. However, policy initiatives alone cannot produce substantive institutional change unless they are translated into transformations of academic culture, curriculum, research orientation, and community engagement. This challenge is particularly significant for Islamic Higher Education Institutions (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam PTKI), which hold strategic responsibilities not only for transmitting Islamic knowledge but also for producing inclusive scholarship and nurturing socially responsible Muslim communities.

Despite this strategic role, multiculturalism within PTKI remains largely normative and formalistic. Islamic values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (justice), and *ukhuwah insaniyah* (human fraternity) are widely promoted in institutional discourse but have not been systematically embedded within academic practices. Teaching frequently remains monological, research has only limited engagement with issues of diversity and social justice, and community engagement rarely functions as a space for intercultural dialogue. Consequently, the central challenge is not merely strengthening students' understanding of tolerance but reconstructing an academic ecosystem that systematically integrates multicultural values throughout the Tri Dharma of higher education.

From a theoretical perspective, multicultural education extends beyond the inclusion of diversity-related content in the curriculum. Rather, it represents a transformative educational paradigm that reshapes institutional structures, pedagogical practices, power relations, and academic culture (Banks & Banks, 2019). Likewise, critical pedagogy emphasizes that education should cultivate critical consciousness capable of transforming unjust social structures, while multicultural education loses its transformative potential when it remains confined to symbolic recognition of diversity without addressing institutional inequalities (Sleeter, 2018; Doucette et al., 2021). These perspectives suggest that multiculturalism in PTKI should evolve from a normative discourse into a transformative framework for institutional change.

Previous scholarship may be classified into three major strands. The first examines religious moderation, tolerance, and counter-radicalism within Islamic higher education (Aziz et al., 2023; Burhanuddin & Ilmi, 2022; Mukhibat et al., 2024). The second explores multicultural education as a foundation for inclusive religious higher education (Nasir & Sibawaihi, 2026). The third focuses on institutional policies supporting religious moderation through curriculum reform and Religious Moderation Centers (Muhlisin et al., 2023; Rosyid, 2022). Collectively, these studies have substantially enriched the discourse on diversity management

in PTKI. Nevertheless, they generally examine teaching, research, community engagement, and institutional policy as separate domains rather than as an integrated academic ecosystem.

This fragmentation reveals an important research gap. Few studies have conceptualized multiculturalism as a comprehensive framework for transforming PTKI academic culture through the synergy of the Tri Dharma of higher education. Existing research largely emphasizes religious attitudes, institutional programs, or curriculum development, while paying limited attention to the epistemological integration of teaching, research, and community engagement as mutually reinforcing dimensions of multicultural transformation. Addressing this gap requires a broader conceptual perspective capable of linking multiculturalism with institutional culture and knowledge production.

Accordingly, this study proposes the Transformative Multiculturalism Framework in Islamic Higher Education, which integrates multicultural education, critical pedagogy, deliberative democracy, religious moderation, and the Tri Dharma of higher education into a unified conceptual model. The framework positions multiculturalism not merely as a curricular component or institutional program but as a transformative paradigm for reconstructing PTKI academic culture. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the transformation of multiculturalism in PTKI through the reconstruction of academic culture based on the synergy of teaching, research, and community engagement. Theoretically, the study contributes to expanding the discourse on multicultural Islamic education from normative and curriculum-oriented perspectives toward a transformative academic culture approach. Practically, it offers a conceptual foundation for PTKI to strengthen inclusive, dialogic, democratic, and socially responsive academic environments.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using library research as its research design. This design was selected because the article is oriented toward developing a conceptual argument on the transformation of multiculturalism in Islamic Higher Education Institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam*, PTKI) through the reconstruction of academic culture based on the synergy of the three missions of higher education. Library research enabled the researcher to critically examine relevant theories, previous research findings, and policy documents in order to construct a coherent conceptual synthesis. In this context, the study was not intended as a systematic literature review that applies strict procedures for literature selection, but rather as a critical library-based inquiry that emphasizes interpretive depth, source relevance, and the strength of theoretical argumentation (Snyder, 2019; Zed, 2014).

Paradigmatically, this study adopted a critical-interpretative approach. This approach views multiculturalism not merely as a normative concept of tolerance, but as an epistemological, pedagogical, and social arena related to power relations, academic culture, knowledge production, and social transformation. Therefore, this study did not simply describe the literature on multiculturalism and Islamic higher education; it also interpreted, compared, and synthesized various ideas in order to formulate the Transformative Multiculturalism Framework in Islamic Higher Education.

Unit of Analysis

The units of analysis in this study were ideas, concepts, research findings, and policy documents related to multiculturalism, Islamic higher education, religious moderation, critical pedagogy, deliberative democracy, academic culture, and the three missions of higher education. The units of analysis were not individuals or field informants, but texts and documents treated as conceptual data sources. Accordingly, the analysis focused on how the discourse of multiculturalism has been constructed, how it has been connected

to Islamic higher education, and the extent to which the concept can be reconstructed as a paradigm for transforming PTKI academic culture.

Data Sources

The data sources consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included theoretical books, journal articles, and major academic works discussing multicultural education, critical pedagogy, deliberative democracy, religious moderation, and Islamic higher education. Key references included works on multicultural education, critical pedagogy, academic culture, and the transformation of higher education. Secondary sources included national and international journal articles, academic books, previous studies, and policy documents relevant to the strengthening of religious moderation, the three missions of higher education, and the development of PTKI.

In addition, this study also used academic and policy documents as analytical materials, including publications from the Ministry of Religious Affairs on religious moderation, studies on Religious Moderation Centers, survey findings on religious tolerance in higher education, and recent studies on moderation, radicalism, intolerance, and multiculturalism in Islamic higher education. The sources were selected purposively based on their substantive relevance to the focus of the article, academic quality, recency, and contribution to the development of the study's conceptual framework.

Data Collection

Data were collected through documentation. The documentation process involved searching, reading, selecting, recording, and organizing literature relevant to the focus of the study. The literature was obtained from academic databases and scholarly repositories such as Google Scholar, Garuda, DOAJ, Crossref, SINTA, as well as relevant national and international journals. The keywords used in the literature search included "multiculturalism," "Islamic higher education institutions," "PTKI," "religious moderation," "multicultural education," "academic culture," "the three missions of higher education," "critical pedagogy," "religious moderation," "Islamic higher education," and "transformative multiculturalism."

Data collection was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher identified literature relevant to multiculturalism, Islamic education, and higher education. Second, the researcher selected literature based on its suitability to the focus of the article, particularly literature discussing religious moderation, academic culture, the three missions of higher education, and the transformation of Islamic education. Third, the researcher classified the literature into several main themes, namely multiculturalism and religious moderation, critical pedagogy, PTKI policy, academic culture, and the synergy of the three missions of higher education. Fourth, the researcher recorded key ideas, research findings, and theoretical arguments used as the basis for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data condensation stage, the researcher selected and simplified various ideas, theories, and research findings relevant to the focus of the study. Literature that was not directly related to the transformation of multiculturalism, PTKI academic culture, or the synergy of the three missions of higher education was not used as the main basis of analysis.

In the data display stage, the researcher organized the conceptual data into several analytical categories: first, the problems of multiculturalism and intolerance in higher education; second, the strengthening of religious moderation in PTKI; third, multicultural education and critical pedagogy; fourth,

academic culture and deliberative democracy; and fifth, the synergy of the three missions of higher education as a basis for social transformation. These categories were used to map the tendencies of previous studies, identify research gaps, and establish conceptual relationships among theoretical variables.

In the conclusion-drawing stage, the researcher conducted a critical interpretation of the patterns, limitations, and contributions of the analyzed literature. The analysis was directed toward identifying the epistemological problems in strengthening multiculturalism within PTKI and formulating a new conceptual framework, namely the Transformative Multiculturalism Framework in Islamic Higher Education. Thus, the data analysis in this study did not stop at describing the literature, but was directed toward conceptual synthesis that contributes theoretically to the development of Islamic higher education.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data in this study was maintained through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, as commonly applied in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was ensured through source triangulation by comparing various types of sources, including theoretical books, journal articles, previous research findings, and policy documents. This triangulation was conducted to ensure that the argument developed in this study was not based on a single type of literature, but was supported by a range of relevant sources.

Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of the analytical process, from literature searching, source selection, and thematic categorization to the development of conceptual synthesis. Confirmability was ensured by grounding the study's conclusions in traceable documentary and literary data, rather than solely in the researcher's subjective assumptions. Transferability was maintained by presenting the context of the study clearly, particularly regarding the position of PTKI, multiculturalism issues, religious moderation, and academic culture, so that readers can assess the relevance of the conceptual findings to broader contexts of Islamic higher education.

Through these procedures, this study sought to establish a methodologically accountable foundation. The critical library-based approach enabled the article to develop a strong conceptual argument, while interactive analysis and source triangulation helped maintain the consistency, traceability, and credibility of the findings.

Table 1. Methodological Matrix of the Study

Methodological Aspect	Description
Research approach	Qualitative
Type of research	Library research
Analytical paradigm	Critical-interpretative
Unit of analysis	Ideas, concepts, theories, previous research findings, and policy documents on multiculturalism, PTKI, religious moderation, academic culture, and the three missions of higher education
Data sources	Academic books, national and international journal articles, policy documents, survey findings, and previous studies
Data collection technique	Documentation through literature searching, reading, selection, note-taking, and classification
Data analysis technique	Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive analysis: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing
Focus of analysis	The reconstruction of multiculturalism as a paradigm for transforming PTKI academic culture through the synergy of the three missions of higher education

Trustworthiness	Source triangulation, audit trail, reference traceability, and interpretive consistency
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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the findings of the document and literature review on the transformation of multiculturalism in Islamic Higher Education Institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam*, PTKI). The findings were organized based on the categorization of data sources, which included literature on multicultural education, critical pedagogy, religious moderation, academic culture, and the three missions of higher education. The analysis generated four main findings: the tendency toward formalism in strengthening multiculturalism in PTKI, the discursive shift from symbolic multiculturalism to transformative multiculturalism, the lack of integration of the three missions as the basis of multicultural academic culture, and the formulation of a conceptual framework for transformative multiculturalism in PTKI.

The Strengthening of Multiculturalism in PTKI Remains Normative and Formalistic

The document review shows that the strengthening of multiculturalism in PTKI is still largely understood as a normative agenda related to tolerance, religious moderation, and the prevention of radicalism. The literature and policy documents analyzed indicate that values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (uprightness or justice), *ukhuwah insaniyah* (human fraternity), and respect for difference have frequently been used as normative foundations for building inclusive Islamic education. However, in many studies, these values are more often positioned as moral and religious content than as a basis for the comprehensive reconstruction of academic culture.

This finding is evident in the tendency of the literature to position multiculturalism as an instrument for shaping tolerant and moderate attitudes, without fully explaining how these values are transformed into the academic system of PTKI. Studies on religious moderation, tolerance, and deradicalization generally emphasize the importance of moderate religious attitudes, but they remain limited in explaining how teaching and learning, research, community engagement, institutional governance, and everyday academic interactions can be developed as a multicultural ecosystem.

Based on the categorization of documents, three forms of formalistic tendencies were identified in the strengthening of multiculturalism in PTKI. First, multiculturalism often appears as a normative discourse in institutional visions, policies, and narratives. Second, multiculturalism is more frequently associated with religious moderation programs and the prevention of radicalism. Third, multiculturalism has not yet been widely developed as an epistemological paradigm that shapes the ways PTKI produce knowledge, manage differences, and build a democratic academic culture.

This finding indicates that the main problem in strengthening multiculturalism in PTKI does not lie only in the weak internalization of tolerance values, but also in the insufficient transformation of these values into the structure of academic culture. Thus, multiculturalism in PTKI still tends to remain at the symbolic and normative level and has not yet fully become an institutional framework that directs the three missions of higher education.

Previous Literature Is Mapped into Three Main Research Tendencies

The mapping of previous studies shows that research on multiculturalism, religious moderation, and Islamic higher education can be classified into three main tendencies. The first tendency consists of studies focusing on religious moderation, tolerance, counter-radicalism, and the prevention of intolerance in higher

education. In this category, multiculturalism is positioned as an instrument for strengthening moderate religious attitudes, preventing extremism, and maintaining socio-religious harmony. The study by Aziz, Yahya, Syukur, and Fathurohman on counter-radicalism and intolerance strategies in Nahdlatul Ulama higher education institutions falls into this category, as it positions Islamic higher education as a space for strengthening moderate religious ideology, Aswaja values, and a tolerant academic culture.

The second tendency consists of studies focusing on multicultural education in religious higher education. In this category, multiculturalism is understood as an important paradigm for developing higher education that is inclusive, dialogic, and responsive to the diversity of society. The study by Mahmud Nasir and Sibawaihi on multiculturalism in religious higher education in Indonesia belongs to this category, as it expands the discourse of multiculturalism from general education to religious higher education. Such studies make an important contribution by affirming that religious higher education needs to develop governance and academic culture that are open to plurality.

The third tendency consists of studies focusing on institutional policy and the implementation of religious moderation in PTKI. Studies in this category examine how higher education institutions respond to religious moderation policies through institutional programs, Religious Moderation Centers, curricula, and academic activities. The main focus of this body of literature lies in policy and program implementation, particularly in examining institutional responses to the religious moderation agenda.

This mapping indicates that previous studies have made important contributions to explaining religious moderation, the prevention of radicalism, multicultural education, and PTKI institutional policy. However, across these three tendencies, few studies have specifically linked multiculturalism to the reconstruction of academic culture based on the synergy of the three missions of higher education. Thus, the gap identified in this study lies in the absence of a conceptual framework that positions multiculturalism as a project of epistemological, pedagogical, and social transformation within PTKI.

Table 2. Summary of the Mapping of Previous Research Tendencies

Research Tendency	Main Focus	Contribution	Identified Limitation
Religious moderation, tolerance, and counter-radicalism	Strengthening moderate attitudes, preventing intolerance, and promoting deradicalization	Explains higher education strategies for building socio-religious harmony	Has not yet positioned multiculturalism as a comprehensive reconstruction of academic culture
Multicultural education in religious higher education	Integration of multicultural values into religious higher education	Expands the study of multiculturalism into the context of religious higher education	Has not systematically integrated the dimensions of the three missions of higher education
Institutional policy and religious moderation in PTKI	Policy implementation, Religious Moderation Centers, and institutional programs	Explains institutional responses to the religious moderation agenda	Has not sufficiently explained the transformation of academic culture as an integrated system

The Three Missions of Higher Education Have Not Been Widely Positioned as a Basis for the Transformation of Multiculturalism

The analysis of the literature shows that discussions of multiculturalism in PTKI remain predominantly situated within the domains of education and teaching. Many studies have examined the integration of tolerance, moderation, and respect for difference into curricula or learning processes. However,

the dimensions of research and community engagement have not been widely examined as integral components of strengthening multiculturalism in PTKI.

This finding reveals a separation among the three domains of the three missions of higher education. In the domain of education and teaching, multiculturalism is more frequently discussed in terms of content, values, learning strategies, and the formation of students' attitudes. In the domain of research, few conceptual models have been found that direct PTKI research toward systematically examining problems of intolerance, social exclusion, identity conflict, and multicultural democracy. In the domain of community engagement, multiculturalism has not yet been widely positioned as a basis for cross-identity dialogue, the empowerment of plural communities, and social transformation grounded in inclusive Islamic values.

This review indicates that the three missions of higher education have not yet been fully understood as an epistemological and practical unity in strengthening multiculturalism. In the documents and literature analyzed, the three missions often appear as administrative obligations of higher education, but they have not always been positioned as instruments for transforming academic culture. As a result, multiculturalism tends to appear partially in teaching and learning, but has not yet been integrated into the orientation of research and community engagement.

Based on these findings, this study identifies the need to develop a framework that connects multiculturalism with the three missions of higher education more systematically. Education and teaching need to be positioned as spaces for fostering dialogic consciousness; research as a space for producing knowledge that is responsive to diversity-related issues; and community engagement as a space of social practice for building an inclusive plural life.

The Formation of the Transformative Multiculturalism Framework in Islamic Higher Education

The conceptual synthesis produced a framework called the Transformative Multiculturalism Framework in Islamic Higher Education. This framework was developed based on the categorization and interpretation of literature on multicultural education, critical pedagogy, deliberative democracy, religious moderation, academic culture, and the three missions of higher education. It positions multiculturalism not as an additional program, but as a paradigm for transforming PTKI academic culture.

This conceptual framework consists of five main components. First, it contains an epistemological foundation that connects Islamic education, multiculturalism, social justice, and universal human values. Second, it includes a transformative paradigm that integrates multicultural education, critical pedagogy, deliberative democracy, religious moderation, and the integrative-interconnective approach. Third, it involves a process of transformation that takes place through the synergy of the three missions of higher education, namely education and teaching, research, and community engagement. Fourth, it promotes a transformative academic culture characterized by academic dialogue, freedom of thought, relational equality, participation, and respect for plurality. Fifth, it aims at transformative outcomes in which PTKI are able to serve as agents of social reconstruction in plural societies.

Within this framework, the dimension of education and teaching is directed toward dialogic, reflective, participatory, and contextual learning. The research dimension is directed toward the development of transformative research that addresses intolerance, radicalism, socio-religious conflict, social exclusion, and multicultural democracy. Meanwhile, the community engagement dimension is directed toward inclusive social involvement through cross-identity dialogue, the empowerment of plural communities, and the strengthening of social harmony. In summary, the conceptual framework produced in this study can be presented in the following table.

Table 3. Conceptual Framework of Transformative Multiculturalism in Islamic Higher Education

Framework Component	Focus of Findings	Transformative Orientation
Epistemological foundation	Integration of Islamic values, multiculturalism, democracy, and social justice	Transforming perspectives on diversity as a basis for knowledge production
Transformative paradigm	Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, deliberative democracy, and religious moderation	Strengthening critical consciousness and academic dialogue
Synergy of the three missions	Education, research, and community engagement	Integrating multiculturalism into all functions of higher education
Transformative academic culture	Dialogue, participation, equality, academic freedom, and respect for plurality	Developing an inclusive and democratic academic ecosystem
Transformative outcomes	PTKI as agents of social reconstruction	Transforming plural societies based on inclusive Islamic values

Discussion

This section discusses the meaning of the four main findings of the study. The discussion is not intended to repeat the results, but to interpret the position of the findings within the broader discourse on multiculturalism, Islamic higher education, academic culture, and the synergy of the three missions of higher education. In general, the findings indicate that the strengthening of multiculturalism in PTKI should not be understood merely as a normative agenda of tolerance and religious moderation, but should be positioned as a project of epistemological, pedagogical, and social reconstruction that transforms the way PTKI develop academic culture.

From Normative Multiculturalism to the Transformation of Academic Culture

The first finding shows that the strengthening of multiculturalism in PTKI remains largely normative and formalistic. Multiculturalism often appears in the form of narratives on tolerance, religious moderation, the prevention of radicalism, and the internalization of moderate Islamic values. This finding is important because it indicates that the main problem in PTKI does not lie in the absence of multicultural values, but in the weak transformation of these values into an academic culture embedded in the practices of higher education.

In this context, multiculturalism in PTKI is still at risk of remaining at the level of symbolic multiculturalism, namely the formal recognition of diversity without substantive changes in academic structures, power relations, and institutional practices. Sleeter's (2018) critique of multicultural education that merely displays diversity symbolically is relevant for understanding this tendency. If multiculturalism is positioned only as a slogan of tolerance, a moderation program, or teaching content, it does not yet touch the deepest dimensions of higher education, namely how campuses produce knowledge, build dialogic spaces, manage differences, and respond to social injustice.

This finding also extends the argument of Banks and Banks (2019) that multicultural education cannot be limited to the integration of diversity-related content into the curriculum, but must involve the transformation of educational culture as a whole. In the context of PTKI, such transformation means that values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (uprightness or justice), and *ukhuwah insaniyah* (human fraternity) should not merely be stated as normative Islamic principles, but must be translated into learning design, academic ethics, freedom of thought, research culture, institutional governance, and patterns of community engagement.

This finding is in line with the studies of Burhanuddin and Ilmi (2022) and Mukhibat, Effendi, Setyawan, and Sutoyo (2024), which emphasize the importance of religious moderation in higher education. However, this study extends those works by positioning moderation and multiculturalism not only as agendas for shaping students' religious attitudes, but also as foundations for reconstructing PTKI academic culture. Thus, the main contribution of this finding lies in shifting the focus from value internalization to the transformation of the academic system.

The implication is that PTKI need to develop multiculturalism policies that are not merely program-based, but grounded in academic culture. This means that the strengthening of multiculturalism should be integrated into curricula, pedagogy, research, community engagement, student affairs governance, and the climate of academic freedom. Without transformation at this level, multiculturalism will remain a normative commitment that is rhetorically strong but practically weak.

This finding indicates that the strengthening of multiculturalism in PTKI needs to move from a symbolic approach toward a transformative one. The resulting conceptual model not only explains the importance of multicultural values but also formulates how these values can be integrated into academic culture through the synergy of the three missions of higher education.

Based on the document and literature review, this study identified four main findings. First, the strengthening of multiculturalism in PTKI remains normative and formalistic, particularly because it is more frequently positioned as a discourse of tolerance, religious moderation, and the prevention of radicalism. Second, previous studies can be mapped into three tendencies: studies on moderation and counter-radicalism, studies on multicultural education in religious higher education, and studies on institutional policy for religious moderation in PTKI. Third, the three missions of higher education have not yet been widely positioned as a strategic unity in transforming multicultural academic culture. Fourth, this study produced the Transformative Multiculturalism Framework in Islamic Higher Education, which integrates multicultural education, critical pedagogy, deliberative democracy, religious moderation, and the synergy of the three missions of PTKI as a basis for reconstructing academic culture.

Mapping Previous Studies and the Need for an Integrative Framework

The second finding shows that studies on multiculturalism, religious moderation, and Islamic higher education can be mapped into three main tendencies: studies on moderation and counter-radicalism, studies on multicultural education in religious higher education, and studies on institutional policy for religious moderation in PTKI. This mapping indicates that the discourse of multiculturalism in Islamic higher education has developed, but it still tends to move sectorally.

The first group of studies, which focuses on moderation, tolerance, and counter-radicalism, has made an important contribution to addressing intolerance and extremism in higher education. The study by Aziz, Yahya, Syukur, and Fathurohman (2023), for example, shows that Nahdlatul Ulama higher education institutions have developed counter-radicalism strategies through the strengthening of Aswaja values, moderate religious culture, and a tolerant academic ecosystem. However, this line of inquiry remains more

strongly oriented toward a protective dimension, namely preventing intolerance and radicalism, rather than toward a transformative dimension, namely developing an academic culture that actively produces multicultural knowledge.

The second group of studies, which focuses on multicultural education in religious higher education, contributes to expanding the discourse of multiculturalism into the context of religion-based higher education. Nasir and Sibawaihi (2026) emphasize the importance of multiculturalism in Indonesian religious higher education as a basis for developing inclusive governance, academic culture, and socio-religious relations. However, this line of inquiry still leaves room for further development, particularly in linking multiculturalism with the synergy of the three missions of higher education.

The third group of studies, which focuses on institutional policy for religious moderation, shows that PTKI have responded to diversity issues through institutional programs such as Religious Moderation Centers, curriculum strengthening, and campus policies. Muhlisin, Kholis, and Rini (2023) emphasize that government policy plays an important role in cultivating religious moderation within PTKI. Rosyid (2022) also shows that the implementation of religious moderation in PTKI is strongly shaped by the institutional context of each campus. However, a policy-based approach alone is insufficient if it is not accompanied by epistemological and academic-cultural transformation.

Therefore, this study extends previous scholarship by offering an integrative reading. Whereas previous studies have tended to separate moderation, multicultural education, institutional policy, and counter-radicalism, this article places these dimensions within a single framework for reconstructing PTKI academic culture. This position is important because higher education does not operate through a single dimension. PTKI shape academic culture through networks of teaching, research, community engagement, policy, student organizations, scholarly authority, and social relations among the academic community.

The academic implication is the need to develop studies on PTKI multiculturalism that do not focus only on students' attitudes or institutional policies, but also examine the configuration of epistemology, pedagogy, institutions, and social praxis as a whole. In this way, multiculturalism can be understood as an institutional paradigm rather than merely an educational theme or a religious moderation program.

The Three Missions of Higher Education as the Axis of Multicultural Transformation in PTKI

The third finding shows that the three missions of higher education have not yet been widely positioned as a basis for the transformation of multiculturalism. Existing studies still predominantly focus on education and teaching, while the dimensions of research and community engagement have not been sufficiently developed as instruments of transformative multiculturalism. This finding confirms the gap between the three missions as the identity of higher education and the still-partial practice of strengthening multiculturalism.

The significance of this finding lies in the fact that multiculturalism in PTKI cannot be confined to the classroom. If multiculturalism is understood only as a value to be taught, students may understand tolerance as a concept, but they do not necessarily experience the campus as a dialogic, democratic, and inclusive academic space. Therefore, multicultural education needs to move from pedagogy toward academic culture. Within the framework of critical pedagogy, Freire (2018) emphasizes that education must foster critical consciousness and the praxis of social transformation. This means that multicultural education in PTKI needs to connect teaching and learning with research and social engagement in society.

In the domain of education and teaching, multiculturalism needs to be developed through dialogic, reflective, participatory, and contextual learning. In the domain of research, PTKI need to develop studies that examine problems of intolerance, identity conflict, social exclusion, injustice, and power relations in plural

societies. In the domain of community engagement, PTKI need to position community engagement not merely as social service activities, but as a space for cross-identity encounters, the empowerment of plural communities, and the strengthening of socio-religious harmony.

This finding extends studies on religious moderation, which have so far tended to place value strengthening primarily within the dimensions of curriculum and institutional programs. In this context, the three missions of higher education can be understood as a mechanism for transforming academic culture. Education shapes consciousness; research produces knowledge; and community engagement tests and brings knowledge to life within society. If these three domains are not connected, multiculturalism can easily become fragmented into partial activities that do not form an institutional culture.

This finding also has practical implications for PTKI management. The strengthening of multiculturalism needs to be designed as an integrated academic policy. The curriculum should include dialogic learning experiences; the research roadmap should provide space for themes of diversity, inclusion, and social justice; and community engagement should be directed toward programs that bring together students, lecturers, and communities in the practice of cross-identity dialogue. Thus, the three missions of higher education are no longer merely administrative obligations, but become an axis of social transformation.

Transformative Multiculturalism Framework as a Conceptual Contribution

The fourth finding produced a conceptual framework called the Transformative Multiculturalism Framework in Islamic Higher Education. This framework is a synthesis of the previous findings, which indicate that strengthening multiculturalism in PTKI requires a shift from a normative approach to a transformative one. This model integrates five main elements: the epistemological foundation of inclusive Islam, multicultural education, critical pedagogy, deliberative democracy, religious moderation, and the synergy of the three missions of higher education.

The main significance of this framework is that multiculturalism needs to be positioned as an academic paradigm, not merely as an institutional program. As an academic paradigm, multiculturalism shapes the ways PTKI understand knowledge, manage diversity of thought, build academic relations, design learning, direct research, and conduct community engagement. Thus, multiculturalism does not stop at the moral dimension, but enters the epistemological and practical dimensions of higher education.

This framework is consistent with the idea of critical pedagogy, which positions education as a space for liberation and social transformation. Freire (2018) emphasizes that education must foster dialogue and critical consciousness, while Giroux (2011) views education as a democratic public sphere. In the context of PTKI, these ideas can be translated into the need to develop campuses that enable the open exchange of ideas, respect for difference, and the production of knowledge oriented toward social justice.

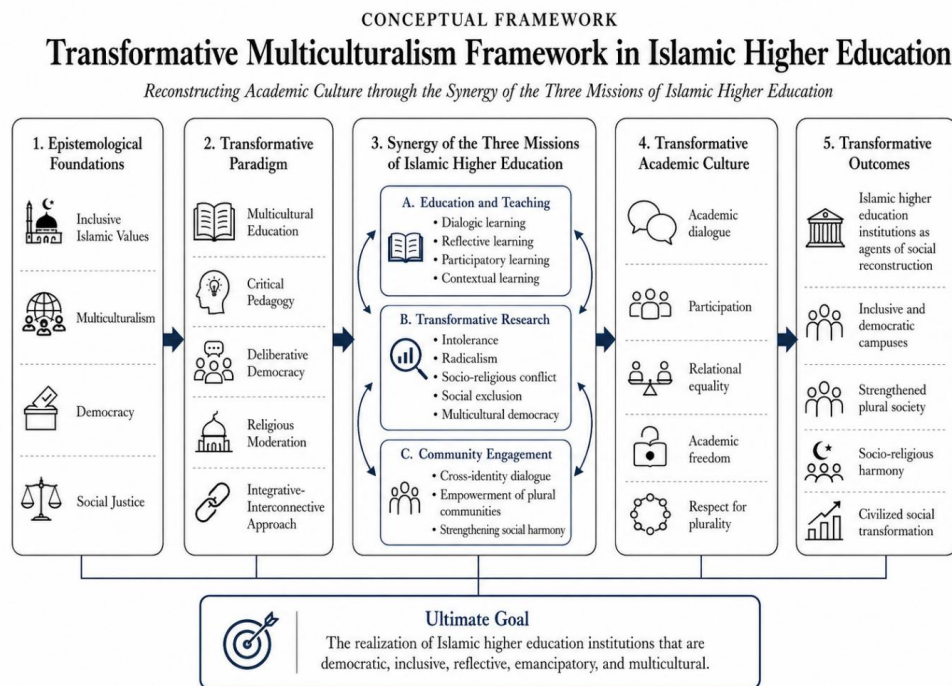
This framework is also closely related to Habermas's idea of deliberative democracy, particularly in terms of the importance of rational, participatory, and domination-free dialogic spaces. Within PTKI, deliberative democracy can be realized through an academic culture that provides space for diverse schools of thought, scholarly traditions, religious organizations, and social perspectives. In this sense, the campus is not only a site for reproducing the authority of knowledge, but also an academic public sphere that enables equal dialogue across identities.

Compared with previous studies, the contribution of this article lies in its effort to integrate several discourses that have often developed separately. Studies on religious moderation have focused on religious attitudes; studies on multicultural education have focused on learning and curriculum; studies on counter-radicalism have focused on the prevention of extremism; and studies on PTKI policy have focused on institutional responses. This article connects all these dimensions through the framework of academic culture

and the synergy of the three missions of higher education. Thus, the novelty of this study lies not merely in the use of the term transformative multiculturalism, but in the construction of the relationship between multiculturalism, the epistemology of Islamic education, and the three missions of PTKI.

The practical implication of this framework is that PTKI need to develop a roadmap for strengthening multiculturalism based on the three missions of higher education. At the policy level, campuses need to develop standards for inclusive academic culture. At the learning level, lecturers need to develop dialogic and reflective pedagogy. At the research level, campuses need to encourage studies on diversity, social conflict, tolerance, and justice. At the level of community engagement, PTKI need to develop programs that bring campuses and plural communities together in a participatory manner. Thus, this framework can serve as a conceptual basis for strengthening PTKI as agents of social reconstruction in multicultural societies.

Based on a conceptual synthesis of the literature on multicultural education, critical pedagogy, deliberative democracy, religious moderation, academic culture, and the three missions of higher education, this study formulates the Transformative Multiculturalism Framework in Islamic Higher Education. This framework positions multiculturalism as a paradigm for transforming PTKI academic culture through five main components: epistemological foundation, transformative paradigm, synergy of the three missions, transformative academic culture, and transformative outcomes. The visualization of this framework is presented in Figure 1.



Source: Authors' conceptual construction

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Transformative Multiculturalism in Islamic Higher Education

Overall, this discussion shows that the main problem in strengthening multiculturalism in PTKI does not lie in the lack of normative Islamic values concerning tolerance, but in the absence of systematic integration of these values into academic culture. The broader pattern emerging from the findings is the need to shift from symbolic multiculturalism toward transformative multiculturalism. This study contributes to expanding the discourse of multicultural Islamic education by positioning the three missions of higher

education as the axis for reconstructing academic culture. Practically, this article offers direction for PTKI in developing policies, teaching and learning, research, and community engagement that are more inclusive, democratic, and emancipatory. The limitation of this article lies in its conceptual nature and library-based design, which means that it has not yet empirically examined the implementation of the framework across various PTKI. Therefore, future research may develop field studies, multi-case studies across PTKI, or evaluative research to examine the extent to which the Transformative Multiculturalism Framework in Islamic Higher Education can be applied in the institutional practices of Islamic higher education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that strengthening multiculturalism in Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) requires a shift from a normative understanding of tolerance and religious moderation toward a transformative academic paradigm. The findings reveal that multiculturalism has largely remained formalistic and has not been systematically integrated into the academic culture of PTKI. To address this gap, the study proposes the Transformative Multiculturalism Framework in Islamic Higher Education, which positions multiculturalism as a guiding paradigm for reconstructing academic culture through the integration of education, research, and community engagement within the three missions of higher education (*Tri Dharma*).

The proposed framework contributes to the discourse on multicultural Islamic education by linking multiculturalism with critical pedagogy, deliberative democracy, religious moderation, and the *Tri Dharma* of higher education. It also provides a conceptual foundation for PTKI to foster more inclusive, dialogic, democratic, and socially responsive academic environments. However, this study is conceptual and based on library research, limiting its ability to validate the framework empirically. Future research should examine its implementation across diverse PTKI contexts through case studies, comparative research, or empirical evaluations to assess its applicability and effectiveness.

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